

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 108280

FOLLOWING REPEAT BRAZIL 03483 ACTION SECSTATE USUN NEW YORK INFO
BUENOS AIRES MONTEVIDEO RIO DE JANEIRO SANTIAGO SAO PAULO
MAY 3.

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L BRASILIA 3483

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, SREF, BR, AR

SUBJ: ARGENTINE REFUGEES IN BRAZIL

REF: A. BUENOS AIRES 3096 (NOTAL) B. STATE 88529 (NOTAL)
C. BUENOS AIRES 3011 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. UNHCR REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE MULLER IN CON-
VERSATION APRIL 27 CONFIRMED EMBASSY IMPRESSION THAT NUMBER
OF ARGENTINE REFUGEES IN BRAZIL HAS INCREASED MARKEDLY IN
RECENT MONTHS, THOUGH RELIABLE ESTIMATES OF TOTAL REFUGEE
POPULATION UNAVAILABLE. MULLER'S REMARKS IMPLIED HOPE THAT
USG WILL PROVIDE ADDITIONAL PAROLE SLOTS TO ASSIST UNHCR IN
COPING WITH PROBLEM. GOB HAS THUS FAR PROVEN COOPER-
ATIVE IN PROVIDING TEMPORARY HAVEN, THOUGH NOT PERMANENT
RESETTLEMENT, BUT UN OFFICIALS ARE CONCERNED BY WHAT THEY
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PERCEIVE AS RECENT COOLING IN GOB ATTITUDES. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFFS SPOKE APRIL 27 WITH ROBERT MULLER, UNHCR
REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE, WHO WAS IN BRASILIA TO BRIEF FONMIN
OFFICIALS PREPARATORY TO ARRIVAL IN BRAZIL OF GUY PRIM (REFTEL A).
MULLER INDICATED THAT, BEGINNING ABOUT TWO MONTHS AGO, GROWTH
RATE IN UNHCR CASELOAD IN BRAZIL INCREASED CONSIDERABLY;

CURRENT REFUGEE CASELOAD IS APPROXIMATELY 80 FAMILIES, REPRESENTING 300 PERSONS, WITH NEW APPLICANTS APPEARING AT THE RATE OF ABOUT 5 FAMILIES PER WEEK -- PRIMARILY ARGENTINES, ALTHOUGH SOME CHILEANS HAVE ALSO SOUGHT HELP. REFUGEES ARE CONCENTRATED IN RIO AND SAO PAULO.

3. TOTAL REFUGEE POPULATION, INCLUDING THOSE WHO HAVE NOT APPROACHED UNHCR, IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE, GIVEN DESIRE OF MANY TO SIMPLY DISAPPEAR INTO THE CROWD, AS WELL AS PROBLEM OF DISTINGUISHING GENUINE REFUGEES FROM THOSE SEEKING BETTER ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OR RELIEF FROM TURMOIL. MULLER INDICATED THAT HE HAD HEARD ESTIMATES OF UP TO 3,000, ALTHOUGH HE BELIEVED THE LATTER FIGURE TO BE CONSIDERABLY OVER THE MARK. (SIMILARLY, ARGENTINE EMBASSY MINISTER-COUNSELOR, IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, TOOK NOTE OF CLAIM BY BRAZILIAN MAGAZINE ISTO E THAT 30 THOUSAND ARGENTINE REFUGEES NOW IN BRAZIL, A FIGURE HE CONSIDERED INCREDIBLE.) THE PROFILE MULLER OFFERED OF THE UNHCR CASELOAD CORRESPONDED TO OUR (LIMITED) IMPRESSIONS DERIVED FROM THE FEW DIRECT APPEALS WE HAVE RECEIVED: REFUGEES TEND TO BE LABOR UNION ACTIVISTS OR MEMBERS OF THE PERONIST YOUTH MOVEMENT (MIDDLE ECHELON OR BELOW), 20-35 YEARS OF AGE, SKILLED WORKERS OR ABOVE ON THE EDUCATIONAL/PROFESSIONAL SCALE, ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO PREPONDERANCE OF UNIVERSITY TRAINED PEOPLE.

4. MULLER SAID THAT GOB HAD THUS FAR PROVEN COOPERATIVE WITH UNHCR, IN THAT IT HAD ACCEPTED PRESENCE OF REFUGEES WHILE UNHCR FOUND THIRD-COUNTRY HAVENS FOR THEM, AND HAD NOT

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ENGAGED IN REFOULEMENT. HOWEVER, GOB HAS NOT ASSUMED ANY SUPPORT COSTS FOR REFUGEES, NOR HAS IT ACCEPTED ANY OF THEM FOR LOCAL RESETTLEMENT. ACCORDING TO MULLER, GOB IS NOT PARTY TO 1967 PROTOCOL TO REFUGEE CONVENTION AND DECLINES TO GO BEYOND 1951 TIMELINE ESTABLISHED BY ORIGINAL CONVENTION IN DEFINING REFUGEES TOWARDS WHOM BRAZIL BEARS AN OBLIGATION. (WE FIND THIS ASSERTION ODD, SINCE TREATIES IN FORCE LISTS BRAZIL AS PARTY TO 1967 PROTOCOL. WE WILL MAKE DISCREET ATTEMPTS HERE TO DETERMINE STATUS OF PROTOCOL, BUT WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF USUN OR DEPARTMENT COULD DETERMINE WHETHER GOB HAS EVER DEPOSITED INSTRUMENTS OF RATIFICATION OR NOTIFIED SECGEN OF ENTRY INTO FORCE FOR BRAZIL OF PROTOCOL WHICH IT PRESUMABLY SIGNED.)

5. MULLER CITED SUCCESS OF AN EARLIER U.S. PAROLE PROGRAM TO ACCOMMODATE 150-175 REFUGEES REFERRED BY UNHCR/BUENOS AIRES, AND INDICATED THAT COUNTRIES SUCH AS FRANCE, GERMANY, AND ESPECIALLY SWEDEN, WHICH HAD PREVIOUSLY ACCEPTED MANY OF THE REFUGEES PROCESSED BY UNHCR IN BRAZIL, WERE

BECOMING RELUCTANT OUT OF FEELING THAT THEY HAD DONE THEIR SHARE AND WERE FACING SATURATION. CLEAR IMPLICATION WAS THAT MULLER HOPED U.S. COULD PROVIDE FURTHER PAROLE SLOTS TO ASSIST IN COPING WITH GROWING PROBLEM IN BRAZIL -- A PROBLEM WHICH HE FEARS MAY BE AGGRAVATED IF WHAT LOCAL UNDP OFFICIALS PERCEIVE AS RECENT COOLING IN GOB ATTITUDE TOWARDS REFUGEES, RESULTS IN LESS COOPERATIVE STANCE. MULLER ALSO MENTIONED THAT UNHCR'S CURRENT BUDGET FOR BRAZIL OF DOLS 10,000/MONTH WILL SOON PROVE INADEQUATE IF CASELOAD CONTINUES TO GROW AT PRESENT RATE.

6. EMBOFF RAISED SUBJECT OF POLITICAL ASYLUM ON INFORMAL BASIS IN JANUARY WITH OFFICIAL OF FONMIN CONSULAR AND JURIDICAL DEPARTMENT. OFFICIAL DENIED THAT GOB HAD RECEIVED ANY REQUESTS FOR POLITICAL ASYLUM FROM ARGENTINES, OBSERVING THAT IT WAS HARDLY TO BE EXPECTED THAT ARGENTINE LEFTISTS WOULD APPLY TO GOB SINCE CLIMATE HERE WAS NOT EXACTLY CONGENIAL. CONFIDENTIAL

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HE DID SAY, HOWEVER, THAT BRAZIL HAD ACCEPTED (AND CONSCIOUSLY BENEFITED FROM) IMMIGRATION OF A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF ARGENTINE PROFESSIONALS AND SKILLED TECHNICIANS (COMMUNICATIONS FIELD WAS CITED AS EXAMPLE), WHO WERE WEARY OF TURMOIL AND PROBABLY VAGUELY FEARFUL GIVEN THE CENTER OR LEFTIST ORIENTATIONS OF A NUMBER OF THEM, BUT WHO COULD NOT REALLY BE TERMED POLITICAL ACTIVISTS OR REFUGEES.

7. IN CONVERSATION WITH POLOFF APRIL 29, MDB DEPUTY AIRTON SOARES, A LEADING HUMAN RIGHTS SPOKESMAN, RECALLED RECENT TALK HE HAD HAD ITH BAENA SOARES, CHIEF OF FONMIN'S DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS (AND GOB'S POINT OF CONTACT WITH UNHCR), WITH RESPECT TO AN ARGENTINE REFUGEE COUPLE IN WHOSE CASE SOARES HAD TAKEN AN INTEREST. BAENA SOARES URGED AIRTON SOARES TO BE DISCREET ABOUT CONTACTS WITH REFUGEES AND SAID THAT FONMIN WAS MAKING AN EFFORT TO ASSIST ABOUT ONE HUNDRED ARGENTINES IN OBTAINING ONWARD MOVEMENT TO THIRD COUNTRIES. HE EMPHASIZED BRAZIL'S DESIRE TO ASSIST ARGENTINES IN DISTRESS AND INDICATED THAT GOB DID NOT WANT THIS ASSISTANCE MISINTERPRETED BY ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT, WITH THE BILATERAL PROBLEMS THAT MIGHT RESULT. AIRTON SOARES TOLD POLOFF THAT THERE WAS NO SIGN THAT ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT HAD EVER PURSUED OR HARRASSED ARGENTINE REFUGEES IN BRAZIL. CRIMMINS BUNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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